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THE YOUNG RIP VAN WINKLE.

BY ALLAN ARNOLD.



The old man made a frantic effort to leap over the brink with Rip. "Over you go, then!" hissed Rip, hurling him over the awful abyss.

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THE YOUNG RIP VAN WINKLE.

BY ALLAN ARNOLD.

Author of "Captain Hurricane; or, The Waif of the Wreck," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE PERIL AND RESCUE.

On a lovely October afternoon, some fifty years ago, a stout youth of nineteen years of age, accompanied by his faithful dog, might have been seen descending the side of a spur of the Allegheny ridge of mountains in the State of Pennsylvania. Away down at the foot of the mountains, nestled among towering trees, lay the quaint little village of Shadyside. Little wreaths of blue smoke curled lazily above the tree tops from the old-fashioned Dutch chimneys, and floated dreamily away with the misty haze of the valley.

Beautiful—beautiful indeed was the quaint little Dutch village, with its white cottages seen here and there through the foliage of the trees from where the youth stopped and gazed upon it.

No wonder his eyes sparkled as he looked upon the lovely scene! He leaned on his gun, and looked down on the little valley below, while his faithful dog crouched at his feet.

Suddenly his dog sprang up, and showed unmistakable signs of excitement.

A wild scream the next moment startled the youth.

"Mine Got!" exclaimed he, "what is that?"

The dog bristled up and fairly trembled with excitement.

"Down, Karl!" commanded the youth; and the faithful dog crouched low on the ground.

But the next moment he was up again.

For a deer bounded by up the mountain side.

The dog sped away in pursuit.

Raising his gun with a quickness that denoted the experienced hunter, the youth fired, and the noble buck sprang high up in the air, and fell back in a death agony—shot through the heart.

"Ah! that is a fine one," said the young hunter, advancing towards the game.

"Help—help!"

"Mine Got—that voice again—down there, too!" and turning away from the prize he had just secured, he sped away down the mountain toward a craggy ravine that had cut a chasm down the slope during a thousand storms.

Twice—thrice—did a piercing scream resound over the mountain-side as he hurried toward the chasm.

Reaching its brink he peered over the abyss just as another cry of:

"Help! help! Oh, must I die?"

Seizing a limb he leaned far over and looked down.

Far below, clinging to a bush that grew in the crevice of the crags, he saw a human being.

A white face was turned up toward him with an appealing look, and the cry of:

"Oh, Rip, save me!" and then fainted—falling and lodging across a projecting crag.

"Katrina! Got in Himmel!" gasped the youth, staggering back as if stricken a terrible blow between the eyes. But in a moment he recovered and again looked over into the awful chasm.

But only for a moment.

He turned away and sprang up the mountain-side like a maniac, followed by his faithful Karl.

Reaching the carcass of the buck, he drew his knife, seized a leg, drew it over on its back, and by a quick, dexterous stroke cut the skin from neck to tail.

"Here, Karl—help if you love me—hold there!"

The dog seized the throat and held the carcass in position for him to skin it.

Great drops of perspiration stood out like beads on the youth's forehead as he worked with a terrible—almost superhuman energy.

Laying the skin on the ground, he cut it into a round circle by cutting off the legs, neck and tail. Then seizing it with his left hand he held the knife in his right and ran it around the circle, cutting a continuous ribbon about two inches in width, which, when all cut, made a length of over sixty feet.

"Come Karl!" he almost screamed, seizing the long rope of deerhide, and bounding back towards the chasm.

Looking over the side of the yawning abyss, he saw the white face of the young girl still silent and motionless.

"Mine Got—let her not die—my Katrina!" he groaned, as he sprang back and began fastening one end of the deerhide to a sapling. This done, he threw the other end over the brink and watched it fall. The end reached several feet below the maiden.

"Karl—watch that!" he said, laying his hand on the knot he had tied round the bush, and then taking a good grip on the deerskin, he sprang over the brink of the precipice. The strain on the bush and deerskin was terrible, but it held fast.

Down—down he slid, till the unconscious maiden was reached.

She had fainted dead away and lodged against a projecting crag. The slightest movement would precipitate her upon the rocks three hundred feet below. He comprehended the peril at a glance.

"Don't wake, Katrina!" he muttered, trying to secure a foothold on the crag. "I know not if you be dead or alive—but wait—wait, darling, but a moment!"

Quickly passing the lower end of the deerskin twice around the waist of the unconscious girl, he tied it hard and fast.

"Saved—saved! my Katrina!" he cried, with delirious joy, and the next moment, losing his footing, would have been dashed to pieces on the rocks, had he not clutched wildly at the deerskin and thus saved himself.

Looking up at the towering brink of the chasm, he beheld his faithful Karl looking down at him.

"Back, Karl!" he cried; "I am coming up—she is saved!"

Then commenced the greatest struggle.

As he climbed upwards he would frequently slip downwards.

A rope of grass or hemp would have been better. But one of green deerhide was the worst of all for climbing. Up—up he struggled, slipping back now and then till he was compelled to seize it with his teeth in order to hold the advantage he gained.

Desperate, indeed, was the chance of his reaching the top, but the thought that the life of the young girl on the crag below depended on his reaching the surface of the brink, nerved him to still more desper-

ate efforts. At last he reached the top and lay panting on the brink. Faithful Karl barked for joy at his narrow escape, and licked his face to show his appreciation of his young master.

A scream again startled him, and springing to his feet, he peered over the brink of the chasm and saw Katrina dangling at the end of the deerskin, having recovered consciousness, moved and fell off the crag. The sudden check the rope gave to her fall awakened her thoroughly, and she screamed with all her might:

"Save me—save me, Rip Van Winkle!"

"I will, Katrina, if this deerskin does not break!" cried the youth, tugging away with all his strength, pulling her up. It was no easy task, for she was no ephemeral creature. She weighed every ounce of 140 pounds, and every pennyweight was a pound of gold in the eyes of the brave youth.

The projecting crags and bushes hindered him not a little.

"Push away from that crag there, Katrina!" he cried, pantingly, "and then you won't get bruised so much—there—up you come! Don't be frightened—I won't let you fall—up—there!—push off from that bush—hold, I must rest awhile—off, Karl! Now again—there now—wait till I tie it around this sapling—now give me your hand—saved—saved, my Katrina!" and as the young girl stood on her feet near the brink of the chasm, the brave youth, exhausted—overcome with joy—sank down on the soft grass in a still, death-like swoon.

"Oh, Rip—Rip, are you dead?" cried the girl, in terrified amazement, as standing over him, she gazed down at her preserver. The dog Karl licked her face and barked joyously, as if proud of the exploit of his brave young master.

"Rip—Rip—my Rip! Speak to me—your Katrina! Oh! mine Got in Himmel, he is dead!" and with a wail of despair, she sank down upon the unconscious body of the youth.

They both lay there until the barking of the dog recalled them. The youth looked around as though uncertain of his whereabouts, and saw Katrina lying across him with the deerskin still tied around her waist.

"Katrina—Katrina!" he called, "you are saved—saved from death! Speak to me—your Rip!"

But it required quite a time to arouse her, and not until he took her in his arms and covered her face with ardent kisses, did she open her eyes.

"Katrina!"

"Rip!"

And the youthful lovers were folded to each other's hearts. She laid her head on his bosom and wept tears of joy. He whom she loved better than all the world beside had saved her life at the risk of his own.

"How did it happen, Katrina?" he asked, after a lengthy pause.

"I was coming down the mountain when a deer rushed by so close to me that in leaping aside I went over the brink. Oh, Rip, but for you I would now be down there—dead!"

"Yes, darling, and but for that deer you would be there, too!"

"How so, Rip?"

"I shot him, and he furnished the rope that drew you up to life and safety again," he replied, taking out his knife and cutting loose the deerskin that encircled her waist.

"Well, he ought to have done so for having frightened me so," she said, looking at the long strip of hide as it lay on the ground attached to the brush. "But you must have made quick work skinning him, Rip."

"So I did, Katrina. A deer was never skinned so quickly before. It was my only hope of saving you, darling."

"What would you have done, Rip, had you not killed that deer?"

"Killed Karl there and made a rope of him!" was the reply of the young lover.

Katrina gave him a sweet smile, for she well knew how dearly he loved his dog.

She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him, murmuring:

"My darling Rip, how I love you!"

"And I would die for you, Katrina!" murmured he, returning her caresses.

"They say you are lazy and good for nothing, Rip, but you are all the world to me," said Katrina, as she rested her head against his heart.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the young lover, pressing her to his bosom.

"I don't know but they tell the truth, Katrina. I am not fond of work, but I love you, and am willing to work ever so hard for you."

"That's what I say to father and mother, but they won't believe me. Oh, if you would only convince them, dear Rip!"

"I will, darling, I will. I'll give 'em the two haunches of that buck, and——"

"Oh, yes, where is it?"

"Up there!" and leading her up the mountain-side a little distance, to where lay the carcass of the noble buck, he proceeded to cut off the two hind quarters. Throwing them over his shoulder, he gave her his gun, and together they started toward the village.

CHAPTER II.

THE LOVERS.

THE sun was sinking behind the crest of the Alleghanies, when young Rip Van Winkle and Katrina Heinrich entered the village of Shadyside. Everybody knew them, and all loved the gentle maiden by Rip's side. Jolly, good-natured, full of fun and frolic, young Rip was a universal favorite with the young people of the village.

But not so with the old people.

They shook their heads and declared him too lazy to earn a living even for himself and dog.

Many gratuitous hints were given old Peter Heinrich by his neighbors, to the effect that Katrina would literally throw herself away if she married "that good-for-nothing Rip."

But the sturdy old Dutchman smoked his pipe, drank his beer, and gave no thought to the young people.

Katrina walked proudly by the side of her handsome lover, carrying his gun and chatting gayly with the young people who flocked about them as they passed on toward her home. The game Rip carried told of his prowess as a hunter.

Of that she was proud.

But she was prouder still when, after telling the story of his wonderful exploit in rescuing her from a terrible death, the youths and maidens of Shadyside praised him as the bravest and truest of men. Quite a crowd followed them to the house of old Peter Heinrich, their interest excited by the story she had told them.

On reaching the home of her parents, Katrina rushed into the house and threw herself weeping on the bosom of her mother.

"Mine gracious, Katrina, what is the matter with you?" anxiously inquired the good dame, on seeing several bruises on her face, and noticing her very great excitement.

"Oh, mother, I thought I would never—never see you again!" cried Katrina, weeping from sheer joy.

"Why, what in the world is the matter, Katrina?"

"Oh, mother, I have had such a narrow escape! Rip saved me from a terrible death!"

"My child in danger!" gasped the affectionate mother, clasping her beautiful daughter closer to her side. "Whas was it? Who did it? Who dares to harm——"

"Here is the chap that did it," said Rip, advancing into the room, and depositing the two haunches of venison on a table.

"Who? You?" asked the mother.

"No—the deer," said Rip, smiling, as he pointed to the game.

"Ah," said old Peter, removing the pipe from his mouth, "the deer chased her, and you shot him mit der gun, eh?"

Old Peter could never speak pure English like his wife and children. He was a native of the old country, whilst they were born at the base of the Alleghanies.

"No, father!" exclaimed Katrina, as she saw Rip smile without making any explanations. "It was not that way. He risked his life to save me," and then she hurriedly told the story of her peril and gallant rescue in a dramatic manner.

The father and mother were surprised—dumfounded.

The good dame threw her arms around Rip's neck and kissed him repeatedly.

"You pe's a prave poy, Rip, if yer do pe so lazy as der duyvil!" said old Peter, grasping his hand and shaking it heartily. "Trink some schnapps mit me, an' kiss Katrina for sweet, eh?"

"Don't care if I do," said Rip, smiling; and laying aside his game-bag, he sat down by the little table, and joined the sturdy old Dutchman in a glass of schnapps.

"Oh, I forgot," exclaimed Katrina, after some ten or fifteen min-

utes had elapsed; "Rip has had no supper, and I know he is hungry."

"Never mind about that, Katrina," said Rip, "I'll get some when I get home."

"Nix," said old Peter. "You trinks mit me, and eats with she. Eh, Katrina?"

"Yes, father, for I know he is very hungry," replied the happy maiden, hastily putting on an apron and proceeding to prepare a supper for herself and Rip.

The family had eaten their evening meal two hours before. But that made no difference with Katrina Heinrich. She was worth a dozen of the pretty, sweet little dears of the present day, in that she was practical—useful.

She seized a carving-knife and cut several large, juicy slices from the venison ham which Rip had deposited on the table, and hurried out into the old-fashioned Dutch kitchen to broil them.

"Trink some more schnapps mit me, Rip, und say Katrina ish von goot girl, eh?" said old Peter, his heart warming under the genial influences of the schnapps and his love for his pretty daughter.

"Oh, yes," Rip replied, "it is a pleasure to do either."

"Yah, und what you do mit dat teer, eh?"

"Oh, you can have it. I brought it home for Katrina."

"Mine gracious, dat meet vill last so long as a week, eh?"

"Yes," said his wife, smiling.

Old Peter Heinrich was very fond of venison and very—very close-fisted in money matters. He mentally calculated how long the two venison hams would last his family, and was well pleased with the result.

Katrina came in, and with rosy cheeks, flashing eyes and one of the sweetest smiles, said:

"Come, Rip, I know you are hungry. I have broiled a steak for you, and mother and father, too, so come with us."

Rip needed no second invitation. The schnapps had given him an increased appetite. He rose up and followed her into the kitchen, where the maiden's parents joined them a minute or two later.

"How nice this bread, coffee and steak is," said Rip, as he fell to and ate the good things before him.

Katrina was the happiest maiden in the village at that moment.

He had praised her cooking!

She could ask no more.

"Yah, dot ish goot," said old Peter, disposing of the slice she had broiled for him. "What you do mit de fore parts, eh?"

"I left them on the mountain," said Rip. "I didn't care for any part but the hams."

"Mine Got in Himmel!" exclaimed the astonished old farmer, "what for you do dot, eh? Dot ish so goot as dis, poy."

"Oh, if you want them, I'll go and get them for you," replied Rip, good-naturedly.

"No—no!" cried Katrina, in alarm; "not to-night—not to-night, Rip."

"Why not? The wolves will get there before morning."

"Oh, they have eaten it ere now," she replied. "Besides, you might stumble over into the chasm in the dark."

"Why, Katrina!" laughed he, "I am one big eye all over. I can see like an owl in the dark."

"Yah, we will go find him," said Peter Heinrich, rising from the table and preparing to go out. In spite of all she could do, Katrina was forced to see her lover carried off by her sturdy parent, who was determined to secure the other half of the slain buck.

Rip went with him in the best of spirits, for the old man was the father of Katrina. That was enough for him to know.

But the maiden sat up until near midnight, at which time they returned with the fore quarters of the buck.

"I know you are tired," she whispered in his ear, as he dropped into a chair, "going back a second time."

"I could do it a dozen times for you, dear," was the reply that brought a happy light to her eyes and a glow to her cheeks.

"Yah, but trink some schnapps," urged old Peter, "und den you kiss mit Katrina and go home."

Rip drank the schnapps, of course. Who, of the name of Van Winkle, ever refused a glass of schnapps?

He then kissed Katrina good-night, shouldered his gun and game-bag and departed.

When he returned to his own house the entire family were asleep. It was the old Dutch custom to "early to bed and early to rise," and old Fritz Van Winkle never deviated from the customs of his fathers.

Rip entered and crept softly up to his room. Of course every inch of the old-fashioned Dutch farm-house was known to him even on the darkest night. Karl, his faithful dog-companion always slept in his room with him.

The next morning Rip slept later than usual on account of having been so long out with old Peter Heinrich the night before. When he came down he met only his mother in the kitchen. His father had eaten breakfast and gone out on the farm, which lay on the outskirts of the village.

"You were out late last night, Rip," said his mother, with an anxious look on her motherly face, as he returned to the kitchen with a half dozen squirrels in his hands, which had lain in his game-bag all night.

"Your father is very angry with you for not helping the hands in the fields yesterday," remarked his mother, "and he will give you a scolding when he sees you."

"I did work awhile, mother, but you know I don't like such work; besides, the matter was not one of such haste."

"But you ought to help do your share of work on the farm, Rip," said the good dame. "How in the world will you ever make a living if you don't work?"

—That was a question that had been asked the youth a thousand times, and his only reply was a smile, or good-natured remark.

"I guess I can work enough to live by, mother," he replied, as he sat down to the table. "See here, I've brought home a square meal now," and holding up the six squirrels before her eyes, he admired them like an old hunter. "Every one of them shot through the head."

Mrs. Van Winkle sighed, and took the squirrels from him, saying:

"There's your breakfast. It's getting cold."

Rip sat down and ate his breakfast in silence, after which he left the house, and strolled out on the farm where the men were at work.

CHAPTER III.

FATHER AND SON.

THE first man he met was his father, old Fritz Van Winkle.

"Dunder und blitzen, Rip!" exclaimed the irascible old Dutchman, "vere you pe you no come to vork, eh?"

"I was out late last night, father," said he, good naturedly, "and overslept myself. I am ready to go to work now, though."

"Der duyvil! You do so much vork as never vas, eh? You go mit dot Katrina Heinrich, und don't vork mit me any more. You shtarve to death, py tam, eh!"

"Oh, we won't starve yet awhile, father," smiled Rip. "I thought you all could get along without me for one day."

"Von day, der duyvil! You go mit von year, und never vork tree dimes. Py tam, if you don't vork mit me some more, oud you go mit der door."

Rip had heard his father in such moods before. He only smiled good naturedly, pulled off his coat, and joined the men in the field gathering the crop. He worked steadily but slowly, talking and laughing with the men, with whom he was a general favorite, until the middle of the afternoon, at which time he left the field and strolled down into the village.

"Halloo, Rip!" greeted him on every side, for the story of his exploit the day before had circulated on every side, gathering forces as it went, until finally the most impossible things were said of him. He laughed and joked with everybody, and at sunset returned homeward to avoid a storm that was coming up.

Old Fritz Van Winkle was detained in the village by the storm. He heard the story in all its facts and fancies from a dozen different sources; among other things, that Rip had killed the finest buck of the season and given it to Katrina's father.

That bit of information maddened him.

He wanted venison as well as Peter Heinrich.

Growling like a bear he trudged homewards through the rain, which had abated somewhat, reaching his house in a blustering rage.

"Vere ish dot Rip?" he growled, as he laid off his wet coat and put on a dry one, shoving his round eyed spectacles to the top of his head.

"He is in the kitchen, cleaning his gun," replied his wife, who sat before the wide, old-fashioned Dutch tiled fire-place, with Karl and the cat at her feet.

Just then Rip entered the room with his gun, having finished cleaning it.

"You son of der duyvil!" cried the irate old farmer, "you no vork mit me! You go shoot mit der gun und gif all der game mit Peter Heinrich! Py tam, you no lif mit me some more. Git oud of mine house you good for nodings lazy son of a——"

"Fritz—Fritz!" cried Rip's mother, springing up and rushing up to her husband, "what in the world is the matter with you?"

"Madder mit me! Vat is der madder mit him! He vorks not mit me any more. He dakes his gun, kill der buck deer und gifs him to Peter Heinrich und prings von leetle shquiere home mit his bag. Py tam, he stays mit mine house no more. Git oud of mine house and——"

"Fritz—Fritz—stop—stop!" cried Mrs. Van Winkle, as the enraged father seized a stout cane and commenced raining blow after blow on Rip's devoted head.

"Oud—oud of mine house, you lazy good-for-nodings!" cried the enraged father, dealing him a blow with the cane that sent him staggering towards the door.

"Oh, mine Gott!" cried Dame Van Winkle, wringing her hands in motherly anguish.

"I will go, father," said Rip, his face as pale as death, "and never darken your door with my presence again."

"Go mit der duyvil oud of mine house!"

"Fritz, my husband! Rip, my son, don't go!" cried the wife and mother, wringing her hands and turning first to one and then the other.

"I will go, mother, but won't forget you. Rip Van Winkle will never stay where he is beaten; farewell, mother—dear mother. Come, Karl, faithful friend, we are not wanted here—mother—mother—mo——"

The sentence was drowned in the roar of the storm as he passed out of the house where he was born, a homeless wanderer in the land of his birth.

CHAPTER IV.

A HOMELESS WANDERER.

OUT in the driving storm, young Rip moved away from the threshold of the old home like one unconscious of what he was doing. He seemed dazed and uncertain in his movements save in one thing, and that was in the fact that he must leave the house. Turning neither to the right nor left, he trudged straight forward through the village toward the base of the mountain.

Not a single human being did he meet in the streets of the village. The driving storm of wind and rain had sent everybody within doors, and every door and window was closed. He saw no one and nobody saw him. So he and Karl kept straight on ahead, neither thinking nor caring where they went.

The cruel words and still more cruel blows of his angry father seemed to burn into his very soul. In his remembrance of them the very storm that raged and howled around him was forgotten.

His cheeks were flushed and a fever danced in his blood. To stop and think would have produced madness. An irresistible impulse impelled him onward; and he moved with a quick step, that would have astonished those who knew him as the slow, good-natured, easy-going Rip, who would do anything in his power to oblige a friend.

At last he reached the foot of the mountain. He did not stop to look where he was going. He had gone up on the mountain so often to hunt game that it seemed he had no other place to go to.

Up—up he ascended in the darkness, Karl close at his heels. The rush of the water down the great chasm in the mountain side was heard above the roar of the storm. He knew every foot of the mountain. He had wandered over it since the days of his childhood. What had he to fear?

Suddenly the rain ceased.

The wind died away and the clouds began to break.

Stray moonbeams struggled through the drifting clouds, lighting up the mountain with a pale, weird light. The rain drops on the browning October leaves glistened in the flitting moonlight like so many fairy diamonds which rattled down upon him whenever he touched a bush in passing.

But young Rip did not pause to examine or admire the scene. He pressed on up the mountain till he passed the spot where he rescued Katrina Heinrich from a terrible death in the great chasm. At any other time he would have stopped and gazed down into the black abyss for the sake of the love he bore the pretty maiden. But not now.

He passed on up—higher and higher, till the great chasm became smaller among the jagged rocks near the crest of the mountain.

Suddenly Karl ran in front, turned, and facing him, barked furiously.

"What is it, Karl?" he asked, speaking for the first time since leaving his father's house.

Karl answered, with a very emphatic bark, acting as though he protested against any further progress in that direction.

"Why, Karl, what's the matter with you? There is nothing here that I can see. You surely do not want to go back?"

"Bow-wow!" protested Karl, each particular bristle on his back standing erect as quills on a fretful porcupine.

"Is it a bear, or wolf, Karl?" Rip asked, after a short pause.

But Karl looked steadily at his master, and barked again, and very emphatically, too, which Rip knew he would not do were there any game about. In that case he would have turned and faced the game instead of his master.

"Sorry you can't speak plainer, good Karl," said Rip, "for I really can't understand you this time," and with that he started forward again. But to his amazement Karl reared up, placed his forepaws against his breast, and whined piteously.

Rip stopped, and letting the breech of his gun drop to the ground, he leaned on the muzzle of the weapon and gazed with a puzzled air at the dog.

"What in the name of old Kringle does it mean!" he muttered. "I never saw him act that way before. If it was a bear he would growl and show fight—and the same were it a wolf. I don't know much about this particular spot—never was here but once or twice and then didn't stop," and looking around at the huge crags and boulders so distinctly revealed under the clear, pale light of a full moon, he saw nothing unusual in the wild solitude of the scene. But the very unusual behavior of the dog made him pause. He sat down on a boulder and gazed at the faithful animal, and tried to read the strange actions he had seen.

Suddenly Karl sprang forward and backed up between his master's knees, growling, but evidently in great fear.

"Why, Karl, good fellow," said Rip, "what's the matter with you? I never saw—— Donder and blitzen!"

He looked up and saw a strange object approaching from behind a cluster of crags hitherto deemed inaccessible.

He sprang up and glared at the man—for so the object proved to be—and seemed undecided whether to retreat, or stand his ground and fire. But he stood still and eyed the man, as though suspicious of him.

The man approached, and when within some five paces of young Rip, stopped and looked him full in the face.

Rip returned his gaze, and saw that he was a hunchback—that his back protruded outward and upward in such a manner as to render it an unusually odd appearance.

On either side of this hump were two five gallon kegs, held together by a cord that passed over it—like a pair of saddle bags. Something seemed to be the matter with the kegs. One would slip down about his ankles, and the other dangle about his hump in a comical way.

While trying to keep the kegs in position, the strange man, with his red nose and broad Dutch face, kept gazing at young Rip, as though he could not take his eyes from him.

At last Rip, having recovered from his surprise, spoke:

"What's the matter with your kegs? Is one heavier than the other?"

At the sound of his voice one of the kegs fell to the ground, and rolled forward towards Rip with such force as to send Karl leaping back, with a:

"Ki-yi-yi!" with one of his fore feet slightly mashed.

"What's the matter now, Karl? Hurt, eh? Why, this keg is heavy, old man."

The strange old man nodded his head and pointed to the keg, and then made a sign of weariness that at once aroused Rip's sympathies.

"Tired, eh? Well, if you don't live too far away I'll help you carry it, if you wish me to."

The stranger nodded again, and pointing to the keg, took up the other and started off toward the wildest-looking part of the crags nearest the great chasm.

"Well, come on, Karl," he said, shouldering the keg and starting on after the stranger. "Who knows but that we may some day stand in need of just such a friend. Lead on, old Kringle—I can keep up with you, I guess—donder und blitzen, Karl! What's the matter with you to-night, anyhow?"

As his young master started off, the poor dog uttered a long wailing howl that reverberated far and wide through the mountains. Rip wheeled around and looked at the dog.

Karl arose up on his hind feet and sent up another doleful howl.

The old man turned and glared at the dog a moment, muttered something in an unknown tongue, at which Karl instantly hushed and quietly crept to his master's feet.

"Come, good Karl," said Rip, stooping and patting him on the head. "Be a good dog and follow me as you have always done. If I can go I am sure you can," and without another word Rip turned away to follow the stranger.

Karl followed closely at his heels, the most dolefully solemn-looking dog the world has ever seen.

The hunchback led the way behind a huge bowlder which stood on the very brink of the chasm, and started down a rugged path that seemed stuck on the side of the precipice.

"No—no!" and Rip drew back in terror from the dangerous pathway. "I can't walk that, old fellow. You may be used to it, but a slip would send me crashing down to the rocks below."

The hunchback, some ten paces in advance, looked back and beckoned him.

Rip shook his head and refused to go.

Karl then advanced and ran along the path with apparent ease.

Rip followed, bearing the keg on his shoulder, and was surprised to see with what ease he could go where he had thought no human foot could tread.

Around, in and out among the crags they went, the silent old hunchback leading the way, and Rip followed, the keg seeming to grow strangely heavy as he progressed.

"I say, my handsome old friend," said Rip, good-naturedly, "wouldn't it be wise for us to stop, rest awhile and tap one of these kegs?"

But the old hunchback said not a word. He pressed on, going over and around the crags with the agility of a lad of ten.

Rip kept on, looking around him at the wondrous scenery. High above him towered the great crags, whilst around and before him lay a beautiful greensward, with caverns near by, trees and sparkling rills—a scene of surpassing beauty. As he admired these he saw not the old hunchback making motions and signals with his hands as he progressed.

Suddenly he found himself surrounded by at least a score of quaint-looking old Dutch characters, who gazed upon him with good-natured, smiling curiosity, without uttering a word.

He stopped, put down the keg, wiped the perspiration from his brow, and looked around at the strangers.

"How do you all do?" he said. "I didn't know so many people lived on the mountain."

But never a word did they answer him. He glared in astonishment, and gazed around for the old hunchback.

He was gone.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE ROLE OF SILENCE.

Young Rip began to feel uncomfortable. He was not used to such receptions among the good people with whom he had come in contact. Everybody had been in the habit of returning the hearty, honest, good-natured salutation of the young man.

"Who the deuce are you people, anyway?" he finally asked, turning to an elderly-looking man near by. "My name is Rip Van Winkle and—oh, you ain't sociable, I see! Well, I'd like to say good-bye to every mother's son of you and go back home—but I haven't got any home now. Karl and I are going to live somewhere in the mountains, ain't we, Karl?"

Karl wagged his tail and rubbed his head against his master's knees.

"Well, if you don't ask me to take a seat I'll just sit down on the ground here and rest awhile. I am tired and dry, too, as I've walked all the way up from Shadyside without stopping;" and laying his gun down on the greensward, he took off his game-bag and hung it on the limb of a sapling near him. He then sat down by the side of his gun, leaned against a stone and gazed around at the queer, silent characters that stood about him.

They returned his gaze, but uttered not a word.

"What kind of people are you that you don't speak to a fellow?" he asked, after a pause. "Haven't any of you got tongues? Maybe you don't understand my language? Just let me hear what you can do in the way of good old Amsterdam lingo, and maybe I can help you out a little—eh? Not a word! Schnapps! Do you understand that? A keg of good old schnapps would loosen every tongue in these mountains. No? Well, hanged if I ain't out! I say, old—" and taking hold of one of the sturdy old Dutchmen near him he started to appeal to him; but ere he could say his say the old man quietly released his hold and walked away.

"What in the name of old Kringle does this mean?" exclaimed young Rip, glaring around at the Dutchmen. "What's the matter with you all? I ain't done anything wrong, and you needn't be afraid of me. Hanged if I am afraid of even the old man of the mountains. Where's old hunchback? If he'll show me the way out of this place I'll go at once."

Just then he saw old hunchback approaching the group with a keg on his shoulder. He advanced a little beyond the group and placed the keg on a rock, fitting it in a place that seemed to have been cut out for it, some three feet above the ground.

The silent Dutchmen then took seats around him on rocks and bowlders—wherever they could find convenient resting places, and turned their attention to the keg, ignoring entirely the presence of young Rip, as though no such person existed. Their quaint dress looked very picturesque in the light of the full moon, which peered over the mountain's craggy crest as if to light up the weird scene for young Rip's special benefit.

At a signal from the old hunchback, every man drew from out of some pocket in his old Dutch coat a large silver tankard, or drinking cup, which he held out toward the keg on the rock. The hunchback took them, one by one, and filled them with some kind of liquor from the keg.

The rich aroma of schnapps filled the air, and young Rip snuffed it eagerly. But as they all raised their cups, and silently drank the aromatic liquor, his eyes flashed indignantly that they did not invite him to drink with them.

"Karl, good dog!" he muttered, laying his hand on Karl's head. "I notice that all dogs haven't four feet and a tail like you. Those who have only two feet and no tail to wag are generally the meanest bred, and it would be an insult to an honest dog like you to call one of 'em a dog. They don't seem to notice us when there is anything to drink about. If there is anything meaner than that I don't want to know it. Listen! They are going to sing a song, I guess."

As he spoke young Rip looked around at the queer characters, and saw that each had again filled his drinking cup. The old hunchback rapped on the keg with his tankard, as if calling for order. They all rose to their feet, holding their glasses high above their heads. Suddenly each opened his mouth and sang—in pantomime.

Rip gazed in dumfounded amazement. They seemed to be singing with tremendous energy, yet Rip could not hear a sound.

"The holy saints protect us!" muttered young Rip. "I must be deaf—I can't hear a word they say! Karl!"

Karl looked up, wagged his tail and gave a low whine, which Rip heard distinctly.

"I heard you then, my boy—and I can hear myself talk—but I can't hear a word of that song! What in the name of old Kringle does it mean, anyhow?"

The song ceased—so he judged from the motions of the silent singers—and each man drained his cup to the dregs, smacking their lips in silent satisfaction as they did so.

Rip could stand it no longer.

The aromatic fumes of the rare good schnapps which the silent party had been drinking was a temptation he could not well resist.

"I say, hunchy!" he called to the old hunchback who presided at

the keg; "I think that after doing what I have done for you a fellow might be invited to drink at least once, even if your stingy souls couldn't stand a second treat. Just pass a cupful of them schnapps over this way, if you please."

But, as before, no attention was paid to him, and he leaned back against the rock with an air of supreme contempt for the whole crowd.

The measure of his disgust was full.

He could say or do no more.

Other songs were sung, speeches made, and toasts drank, not a syllable of which was heard by young Rip, though he listened for the slightest sound.

"They don't seem to be getting drunk," muttered Rip, as glassful after glassful disappeared down the thirsty throats of the silent revelers; "but I wish they would, for then some drunken Dutchman might feel generous enough to ask me to have some schnapps. Lord, how dry I am!"

Just then the hunchback drew a mugful from the keg, and advancing toward young Rip, held it toward him.

"Why, bless my soul!" exclaimed young Rip, his eyes sparkling as he took the heavy, brimming tankard and held it up; "I hope this strain on your generosity will not make you less human than you are. Good schnapps will make all the world akin;" and then looking around at the queer-looking Dutchmen, who stared at him in expectancy, he said:

"Here's to your schnapps: 'May it never cease to flow until it makes us better men! Amen!'"

As he raised the cup to his lips and drained off its contents, the silent Dutchmen suddenly pointed their tankards at him, crying out loudly:

"Ho—ho! Ha—ha! Rip Van Winkle! Ho—ho!" and then relapsed into a strange silence again.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MYSTERIOUS PAPERS.

THE sudden noise by the hitherto silent Dutchmen startled young Rip, causing him to stare around in a dazed sort of way.

But the Dutchmen never again noticed him. They again filled up their tankards and quaffed the aromatic schnapps in silent gusto, leaving young Rip to be an unsatisfied spectator to their revelry.

"Well, if that doesn't beat old Kringle himself," he muttered, "then I am no judge of queer things. Now if they would only give you a bone, Karl, they might laugh at you, too, eh, old dog?"

Karl gave a wag of his tail that spoke volumes in favor of the bone, but it didn't fetch the bone.

An hour passed, and then the old hunchback waved his hand above his head, as if giving a signal of some kind. Each man quickly thrust his tankard out of sight under his coat, and then turned away, walking off as unconcerned as though he had not tasted a drop of the delicious schnapps. In a couple of minutes not a man was in sight. Even the old hunchback had placed the keg on his shoulder and marched off with it, leaving Rip alone with his dog.

"Gone!" exclaimed Rip, looking about the great craggy heights that surrounded the lonely spot, giving a slight shudder at the oppressive solitude of the place, "and not one was polite enough to offer us shelter for the night, Karl. Well, well, I won't insult you by calling 'em dogs, old fellow, but I wouldn't have treated a dog that way. This is a wide, wide world to live in, Karl, and there are many very strange people in it; but I never dreamed of a people having so little fellow-feeling as these people have shown. It is a way of the world to kick a man when he is down. We are down now, Karl, and must expect to be kicked. But we'll bear it like philosophers. The kicks won't kill us; we can stand it. But I say, what sort of a place is this, anyhow? Let's have a look around, and see if we can't find some kind of shelter for the night."

Leaving his gun and game-bag where he had placed them, young Rip wandered over to where the old hunchback had dealt out the aromatic schnapps so liberally to the silent revelers. The aroma of the delightful beverage lingered still about the spot, tantalizing him in no small degree. Wandering still further beyond, he could find no sign of any habitation. Only the towering crags stared him in the face. He even sought among the crags for caverns into which the silent revelers might have gone. But no; no caves were there—only great crags and boulders—whose solitude seemed enhanced by the pale light of the moon.

"Where the duyvil did they go?" exclaimed Rip, gazing around in great perplexity. "I can't find a single house around here. They must have some place to go to, that's certain. But where is it?"

He made a complete circuit of the little dell, or vale, and found only the craggy sides of the mountain rising up before him in every direction. There were neither houses nor caverns to be seen.

"Well, Karl," he said after a pause, "we've got the whole place to

ourselves to-night. I suppose they won't object to our camping out here on the grass. We have no other home now, good Karl. I don't suppose I am any better than you are in some things. We've always been good friends. We will remain friends to the last. I feel very sleepy, somehow. It must be those schnapps I drank. It was a big drink; I was dry—very dry, Karl."

By this time young Rip had returned to the spot where his gun and game-bag had been left, and sat down by the rock against which he had leaned while looking on at the drinking scene of the silent Dutchmen.

Karl gave a piteous whine and licked his young master's face and hands in true canine affection.

"Good Karl," said Rip, very drowsily, patting him on the head. "Go to sleep—good dog—I am very sleepy—go to sleep."

But Karl was far from being sleepy. He sprang up and pranced around his young master, barking, whining and licking his face and hands, to the great annoyance of Rip.

"Go away, Karl!" he cried, sharply, kicking at the dog. "I want to sleep!"

"Rip Van Winkle—Rip Van Winkle!" called a sharp voice, some distance beyond the rocks where the silent revelry was held.

"Halloo! Who calls me?" cried Rip, suddenly arising up and glaring around, rubbing his eyes as if to more thoroughly arouse himself.

Karl barked furiously, bristling up as if about to engage in deadly combat.

"Hush, Karl! Who calls Rip Van Winkle?"

No answer.

"Did I really hear some one call, or was it only a fancy?" he muttered, uncertain about it, yet loath to give up the hope that somebody really was near to keep him company the rest of the night.

He sat down again and was almost asleep—a heavy drowsiness having come upon him, when a long, mournful wail sounded far and wide over the little vale and was echoed and re-echoed from crag to crag. Raising his head by an effort, he listened.

This time he was not deceived.

He heard his name called distinctly, twice:

"Rip Van Winkle—Rip Van Winkle!"

"Here I am!" he cried, springing to his feet and reeling forward like a drunken man; "who calls—who calls Rip Van Winkle?"

A wild scream rang out on the still night air.

Rip's hair stood on end with terror.

He sprang forward to seize his gun, but was stopped by an old woman who rushed toward him, holding a white package above her head.

He drew back as she advanced, but she was swift of foot, and in a moment was at his side.

"Rip Van Winkle!" she cried, suddenly placing the package, which proved to be a bundle of papers, in his hand, "these are the records for which they seek my life! Take them—keep them—hide them till the true heir is found. I am Katrina Von Heinrich, of Hesse Cassel. I fly for my life—farewell—guard the papers with your life. But no—no—put them here—they may slay you as they would me!" and snatching the papers from his hand, she thrust them into a knot-hole in the trunk of a gnarled old tree which stood within a few paces of them.

Then, with a shrill scream, she sprang away, bounding like a frightened fawn toward the spot where Rip had entered the vale in the footsteps of the old hunchback.

In another moment she was out of sight.

Rip glared like one in a dream.

He rubbed his eyes, pinched his thigh, spoke to Karl, who crouched at his feet trembling like a leaf, and wondered if he were really awake.

"What the duyvil does it all mean, anyhow?" he asked himself, completely confounded by the sudden occurrence. But the next moment he was startled still more on seeing a dozen angry Dutchmen running toward him, brandishing clubs and gesticulating wildly.

"Look out for a dead Dutchman!" he whispered, cocking his gun as he picked it up and stood on the defensive.

On came the silent Dutchmen, for they proved to be the same party, or a portion of them, whom Rip had seen at the drinking bout. They did not seem to see or notice Rip, but pushed on in pursuit of the old dame.

"Well—well, what a pack of silent brutes you are!" muttered Rip. "Pursue an old woman like that just to get a bundle of papers from her. I know where they are, but I'd see you all at old Kringle's before I'd tell you."

The pursuing Dutchmen were soon out of sight. Rip stood still and listened, but not a sound disturbed the terrible solitude of the little vale. The absence of the hum of insect life rendered the solitude all the more oppressive. There was literally nothing to relieve the frightfully monotonous silence of the scene.

He stood there waiting and watching until that heavy drowsiness came over him again. He staggered back towards the rock where he had sat, laid down his gun and stretched himself alongside of it.

"Karl, good dog," he murmured, "I will feel better after sleeping awhile. Wake me up if any more dumb Dutchmen come around this way. I am so sleepy—Katrina—darling—no home—hunchback—schnapps—"

As his eyes closed, the last sound he heard was a long, doleful, dismal howl, as of hopeless despair, from his faithful Karl.

CHAPTER VII.

FAITHFUL KATRINA.

THE reader will doubtless remember the night when old Fritz Van Winkle cudgeled young Rip so unmercifully, and drove him from the parental roof—how a furious storm of wind and rain was raging at the time.

Good Dame Van Winkle loved her jolly, good-natured son, knowing that, notwithstanding his aversion to work, he had a good heart. He was always kind and affectionate to her, hence she grieved sorely when she saw him driven out in the storm, without food or shelter.

She swooned like one dead, and remained unconscious so long that old Fritz became greatly alarmed. He sent one of his hired men to one of his neighbors for aid.

Several neighbors came in, and aided in restoring her to consciousness.

She came to with a groan and a shriek.

"Don't—don't, Fritz—he's our boy!" she moaned. "You will kill him—oh, mine Gott!"

Old Fritz was forced to explain matters to his neighbors, which he did by telling the truth—that he had driven young Rip from home that night, which caused his good dame to faint.

Nearly all the old people of the village of Shadyside declared the next day that old Fritz had done right—that young Rip was old enough and strong enough to support himself, and that it was right to force him to do so. But the young people of both sexes were unanimous in condemning the action of the old Dutchman. Rip was universally liked—everybody was his friend.

Early the next morning Dame Van Winkle hurried over to see Dame Heinrich, hoping that young Rip would be there—knowing that Katrina would be attraction enough to draw him there if he went anywhere.

"Have you seen Rip?" was the first question she asked on entering the house of the Heinrichs.

"No," replied Dame Heinrich. "Where is he?"

"I only wish I knew," replied the now anxious mother; "he left home last night, since which time I have not seen him. Did you see him last night, Katrina?"

"No," said Katrina, turning pale as death, "what is the matter?"

"He and his father quarreled last night—very foolishly—and his father drove him from the house with some very harsh words, telling him not to come back again. Oh, where is my boy?"

"Mine Gott!" gasped Katrina, "I shall die if harm comes to my Rip!"

"Katrina Heinrich!" exclaimed Dame Van Winkle, "do you love my boy?"

"Better than I do my own soul do I love Rip Van Winkle," taking the good dame's hand in her own. "Tell me, is he gone away?"

"I don't know where he is. He went away with his dog and gun and I have not seen him since," replied the mother, with a deep sigh.

"Oh, why didn't he come to me?" moaned Katrina. "I would have married him and then he would have had a home of his own. He saved my life—my life is his—I love him and would work like a slave for him all the days of my life!"

"And he loves you—he told me so," said Dame Van Winkle, her eyes filling with tears.

Katrina threw her arms around the anxious mother's neck and called her mother.

"Yes, you shall have a daughter's place in my heart, Katrina," murmured the dame. "I will love you for your sake and his. He will come back to us, for his love for you will draw him to you. Send me word as soon as you see or hear from him."

"I will—I will," sobbed Katrina, as the good dame took leave of her and returned to her own home—now rendered desolate by this cruel blow.

Such is mother's love.

How it clings to the erring child even when all the world has forsaken it.

The news flew through the village, and ere noon of that day, every man, woman and child knew all about it. Many were on the lookout for him, as old Peter Heinrich said he would give him Katrina and a house as a reward for his great exploit in saving his daughter's life.

But young Rip was not seen that day nor the next, and when a week passed without anything being heard from him, public sentiment in the village began to turn against Fritz Van Winkle.

The young men hooted at and taunted him when they met him. Dame Van Winkle grieved herself to a mere shadow of her former self.

"Where is my boy?" she asked of old Fritz every day. But the irate old Dutch farmer swore harder than ever that Rip should not again live under his roof.

He was done with him.

The weeks rolled into months, and still no one had heard from young Rip. He and his dog had drifted into a mysterious disappearance. Katrina Heinrich tried hard to keep up her courage. She would not believe that Rip could forget her one moment; something was wrong with him. He would write to her—would come back if he could. What then was the matter? Why did he not write or come? She loved him, oh, so much—and he was so brave and true—she could not—would not doubt him for a moment.

The months rolled into a year, and still the fate of young Rip Van Winkle remained a mystery. People began to shake their heads,

and hint of many things that might have happened to him. Dame Van Winkle and Katrina Heinrich were the only ones in the village who seriously entertained hopes of ever again seeing him.

One day, when he supposed Katrina had forgotten her lost love, young Hans Gelder asked her to be his wife.

She looked at him, surprised and pained.

He was honest, true and manly—was Hans, and any young woman would have been proud to have him for her husband.

But not so with Katrina.

"If you love me, Hans," she said, softly—a sympathetic tear glistening on each cheek—"I am sorry for you—I could not help it—I never encouraged you. I could not be your wife because I am engaged to the only man I could love."

"You engaged, Katrina!" exclaimed Hans, in surprise.

"Yes—to Rip Van Winkle," was the calm reply.

"Oh, Katrina, do you think you will ever see him again?"

"If I do not I will see him in heaven," she said, her sweet face all aglow with the light of a never dying love. "For I am his for all eternity!" and as she pointed heavenward, and turned her tearful eyes in the same direction, Hans Gelder thought she was never so beautiful as then, and loved her more than ever. But he thought such a deathless love as hers too pure and holy to be trifled with. He withdrew from her presence with the conviction that his love was hopeless—that Katrina Heinrich would never wed in this life.

CHAPTER VIII.

RIP WAKES UP.

YEARS sped on, and old Fritz Van Winkle, either annoyed by the reproaches of his good dame and his neighbors, or else urged by a foolish, mulish obstinacy, became more bitter in denunciations of his absent son. He was one of a certain class of men who will never acknowledge an error. He would have suffered the loss of his good right arm rather than utter a word of self-reproach or of penitence to his suffering wife. Had young Rip returned, confessed his sin, and promised hard work for the future, he would have taken him to his heart and corn-field with the greatest alacrity. But Rip came not, and the old man soured. He drank deeper of his beloved schnapps, and cursed his son for "von tam good for nodings poy—py tam!"

Ten years rolled away, and the story of young Rip Van Winkle was only told to strangers who stopped in the village whenever the family name, or that of Katrina Heinrich were mentioned.

Katrina, pale, sad-faced, but yet lovely as a woman with a forlorn hope in her heart could be, lived with her parents, loved only as a daughter could be loved, and never thought of wedding any of the young men who sought her hand. The broad acres of old Peter Heinrich were very attractive when encumbered by pretty Katrina. Many sought the land for the sake of incumbrance—and many the incumbrance for the sake of the land. But all were treated alike—sent away to seek land with incumbrances elsewhere.

She never for a moment entertained a thought unfaithful to Rip Van Winkle.

But where was young Rip during all this time?

The reader will remember how, ten years before, the jolly young fellow was driven out into the storm, with his gun and dog, by his enraged father—how he wandered off up the mountain's side, stumbling across an old hunchback, who led him away among the crags where he had never been before, to a lovely little vale in the very heart of the mountain—how he watched and commented on the strange and quaint old Dutch characters he met there—how he drank of the fragrant schnapps with the silent revelers, saw them disperse, heard the shrieks of the old dame, saw her pursued by the men, and then dropped off into a heavy, dreamless sleep.

Let us now, after the lapse of ten years, go in search of young Rip. Everybody save a few faithful hearts have forgotten him in Shadyside. We enter the winding pathway that leads along the brink of the mountain chasm, and follow it along its tortuous way towards the Vale of Silence, where young Rip traveled ten years before with the keg of schnapps on his shoulder.

We enter the vale and approach the spot where we last saw our young hero, and—good heavens! look there—there lies young Rip! He looks as if he had been lying there this ten years past. Oh, heavens! found at last—he is found, but—dead!

Dead! No, it can't be.

Ha! he moves.

He raises his hand to his head with a slow, painful movement.

He opens his eyes and looks up at the clear, blue sky beyond the top of the crags.

"I must have slept a long time," he said, rising slightly on his elbow, slowly, as if his limbs were benumbed with the dampness of the night dew, "and I've taken a cold in every joint, too, I believe. Whew! I've got the rheumatiz in every limb. Oh! ah! Karl, good dog, here, come here; where are you?"

But Karl did not come at his call, and he rose to a sitting posture to look around for his dog.

"Karl—Karl! here, Karl, good dog!" he called, and then attempted to whistle. At that moment he discovered that he had a heavy beard and mustache.

He sprang upon his feet, almost crying out with the pain in his joints as he did so, and ran his fingers through his flowing beard, now over a foot long. He attempted to pull it off, but he found it had roots like the hair on his head.

"What in the name of old Kringle does it mean?" he asked, glaring around at the surroundings and then again at his beard.

"I like a joke as well as anybody," he muttered, as he stood pulling at the tangled mass of beard, "but I don't like this kind of a joke very much. Those queer fellows must have stuck this beard on me when I slept last night. I wonder if it will come off when I wash my face? Oh, why, my hair is hanging all down my back in a tangled mass! The stingy old rascals must have treated me as meanly when I was asleep as they did before. And they've taken my good clothes off and—why, these old rags are all as rotten as dead leaves! What a confounded mean set they must be! Karl—Karl—here, Karl! Confound it, they've stolen my dog, too, I believe. Well, if there is a meaner set of fellows anywhere than those rascally Dutchmen I don't want to meet 'em. I must go back home and get some more clothes—these are so rotten they won't stay on me much longer; I am hungry, too. There's my gun as rusty as any piece of iron I ever saw. I didn't think the dew of one night would spoil it so badly."

Stepping forward a few steps to pick up his gun, he was astonished to find his joints so stiff; it almost made him cry out with pain to bend an arm or knee.

"Ugh!" he groaned, "I've got the rheumatiz bad; Mountain Dew never served me so before; if I had some of those schnapps this morning they would do me good."

Stooping and slowly taking up his gun he was thunderstruck to see the stock fall to pieces, leaving only the rusty barrel in his hand.

"Donder und blitzten!" he exclaimed, staring wildly at the wreck of his beloved weapon; "this ain't my gun! I'll break some rascally Dutchman's head if they don't bring back my dog and gun! My game-bag! I hung it on a bush and now there it hangs on a tree a mere bunch of strings. They think they've played me a nice trick, but as sure as my name is Rip Van Winkle, I'll play 'em another."

Rip was mad. He stared up at the game-bag hanging in shreds, then down at the rusty old gun barrel which he held in his hands, and the ragged clothes that so tenaciously clung to him.

"Am I awake?" he muttered to himself, after a pause, during which he glared around at the crags, trees and rocks; everything was as he saw them last with the exception of the trees and bushes. They all seemed to have had a wonderful growth since the night before. But the absence of his dog and the ruin of his gun affected him most. "If I am not awake then I must be asleep; can't I wake myself up? Ugh! how my joints ache."

He walked up and down among the rocks until his benumbed joints ceased to hurt him, talking and muttering to himself.

At last he managed to reach the game-bag by means of the gun-barrel, and examined it. It was his old bag. He recognized it by certain marks on it. This seemed to puzzle him more than anything else.

Then again, he examined his beard, and found that instead of a false beard it was genuine; the hair on his head was also genuine, though as long as a woman's.

"This ain't me," he uttered, suddenly stopping and sitting down on a small bowlder. "I am not Rip Van Winkle, and I'll bet Katrina Heinrich won't know me—my dog Karl won't know me—my good mother won't know me—my friends won't know me. Who, then, am I?"

A feeling of overwhelming loneliness came over him, and the tears gushed from his eyes in spite of himself. He wept long and silently, until it seemed that his overburdened heart was relieved.

A longing then to see his mother and Katrina took possession of him. Shouldering the rusty old gun-barrel and the dilapidated game-bag, he slowly wended his way towards the only outlet the little vale seemed to have. He was a long time finding the little narrow path that led along under the frowning crags. But he did so after a while. Before leaving the vale he turned several times, and whistled for his dog. But the faithful animal responded not, so with a heavy heart he proceeded alone.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RETURN.

STRUGGLING slowly along up the tortuous path that wound in and out among the beetling crags, Rip finally reached the top of the great chasm that cut so deep into the mountain's side. There he noticed changes in the forest which he had not before seen, but could not understand. The thought that he was bewitched seemed to take possession of him. He had an indistinct recollection of seeing an old woman down in the vale, who said something to him about some papers and then fled, pursued by some of those silent Dutchmen, who drank such good schnapps yet were so unsocial withal.

But he trudged on, gaining strength as he went; his limbs lost their numbness, and he felt as strong as a young lion.

Suddenly he heard a fierce growl in the bushes just in front of him, and halting, waited to see what it was. He did not wait very long, for the bushes parted, and a huge black bear reared on its hind feet and confronted him.

Quick as thought Rip raised his gun to fire, but the rusty weapon was worthless, save as a club. He reversed ends and dealt the pugnacious brute a blow that crushed his head as though it had been nothing more than an eggshell.

Brute rolled over dead, and Rip was quite astonished at the tremendous force of the blow himself. He felt for his knife but it was not in its usual place. The pocket had no bottom to it, so the knife dropped out somewhere.

"I'll have to leave him here," he said, after a pause, "and come back after him. Old Peter Heinrich would like to have the skin and meat, I guess."

Leaving the dead bear where he fell, Rip proceeded down the mountain side, keeping near the great chasm. He soon saw a pathway that seemed to have been used more than he noticed before. He followed it, and in five minutes' time found himself standing over the very spot where he rescued Katrina Heinrich from a terrible death. But it puzzled him to see how well trodden the place was. Seats were arranged near at the base of the trees, commanding good views of the scenery over and beyond the great chasm. Near the brink of the chasm stood a post bearing a neat board, on which was the following inscription:

"It was on this spot that Katrina Heinrich, daughter of Peter Heinrich, Mayor of Shadyside, fell over the brink of the chasm, lodged on a crag many feet below, whence she was rescued by young Rip Van Winkle on the 5th day of October, 18—. Two days later Van Winkle disappeared and has never since been heard of. Erected by order of his Honor, the Mayor of Shadyside, this 5th day of October, 18—, in grateful remembrance of the heroic youth."

"Mine Gott in Himmel!" exclaimed Rip, staggering back in petrified horror as he gazed at the figures of the two dates. They were just ten years apart! "Have I been gone ten years? Am I Rip Van Winkle? I know this place. I know Katrina Heinrich, and recollect rescuing her from certain death just over the brink here, but it wasn't ten years ago—no—no—no, I am dreaming, or else this is a cruel joke. Peter Heinrich is not the mayor, for they don't have mayors in Shadyside. But—" and running his fingers slowly through his hair and beard, he seemed exceedingly puzzled, and shaking his head sadly, he muttered: "I don't understand it—I don't understand it. I'll go and see if Katrina knows me. I don't know myself."

But the gentle memory of Katrina held him about the spot nearly an hour longer, and as he was about to leave he heard voices below. Looking down the mountain side, he saw several young men and maidens climbing up the path towards the very spot where he sat. He would have left, but an irresistible desire to hear something about Katrina detained him.

"Oh, how tired I am!" exclaimed a young maiden of sweet sixteen summers, as she rushed forward and threw herself on one of the seats. "I declare it's an awful thing to walk all the way up this mountain, just to sit and look over this awful chasm. If it were not for the romance of Rip and Katrina, I would never think of taking the walk."

"Nor I," said another lively young miss, who was dressed in a fashion entirely unknown to our hero, as, in fact, all of them were. "But it's such a romantic spot; and just think of the love that would make a man risk his life as Rip did, for the girl of his heart. It is not every man that loved as he did—and then there's the mystery that enshrouds his fate. They say his ghost comes here on the night of every 5th of October and weeps for his Katrina."

"Yes, and Katrina, who has never married, comes here every anniversary of that day and weeps for her lost Rip. She will never marry—poor Katrina!"

Rip, who was a silent, unnoticed listener to this conversation between the two young maidens, buried his face in his hands, and wept like a child. The story of his Katrina's devotion touched his heart. His evident distress attracted the attention of one of the young maidens, who went up to where he was sitting and asked:

"Why do you weep, sir? Are you in distress?"

"No; my heart was melted by the story of Rip and his Katrina. I have loved as young Rip did, and have never seen my love since we parted."

"How long since you saw her?" asked another bright-eyed lass, as the entire party crowded around him.

"I don't know—not since the day Rip Van Winkle left Shadyside," was the sad, yet cautious reply.

"Did you know Rip Van Winkle?" several asked, eagerly.

"Alas, yes; I knew him well," sighed he.

"I remember seeing him as he came home with the venison on his shoulder, and sweet Katrina walking by his side," said a black-eyed miss of some eighteen summers. "He was a handsome young man, and everybody liked him. But his father drove him from home because he wouldn't work all day in the field with the hired men."

"Yes, and everybody hates old Fritz Van Winkle," said another.

"Does old Fritz and his dame live at the old place, yet?" Rip asked.

"Oh, yes; and he's very rich now. The town has grown out and spread all over his farm, but he is just as mean and stingy as ever. Old Peter Heinrich, Katrina's father, has beaten him three times for mayor."

"Oh, pshaw! Old Fritz couldn't be elected pound-master in Shadyside," added a young man. "We haven't forgotten how he treated Rip. He never comes here to see this spot, and doesn't seem to care anything about anybody or anything but his money."

"The town has grown much since Rip went away, then?"

"Oh, yes; it's a city now," said the young man, proudly.

"Why, haven't you been there in ten years?" asked a young girl, her great blue eyes opening wide in wondrous surprise.

"No, miss. I have just come over the mountain, and sat down here to rest. I am going down to the town to see some old friends there. Does old Peter live at the old homestead yet?"

"Ah, no! He lives in a big fine house upon the hillside. He's our mayor now."

"Yes; and Katrina?"

"She is the sweetest, sad-eyed woman that ever lived, and everybody loves her. She's always doing good for somebody."

Rip hung his head, and the tears coursed down his cheeks. The praises of his loved one caused them to flow in spite of him.

"I killed a bear just now," he said, "near where Rip slew the deer,

but had no knife to skin it with. If one of you young men will lend me a knife, I will get its skin, and take it into town, sell it, and get enough to buy me some clothes."

Several young men at once tendered pocket-knives, and then volunteered to go with him to where lay the carcass of the bear. He showed them the way, and sure enough there lay the dead bear, with its head crushed out of shape by the blow from the old rusty gun barrel.

"You must have given him a powerful blow," said one of the young men.

"I guess I did," replied Rip, quietly, as he proceeded to divest the dead bear of his shaggy overcoat. It was accomplished in a few moments, the two hams cut off, tied together, and with the heavy bundle hung on his old gun barrel, he took leave of the party, and wended his way down toward the town.

On reaching town he was puzzled by the number and style of houses. Where old fields once lay were now rows of houses, and the streets were roaring with the noise of vehicles. He was forced to inquire for the residence of the mayor. His queer dress—ragged and torn—the rusty gun barrel, dilapidated game-bag, and the hide and two hams of the bear, all made him an object of interest to the passers by on the streets. Troops of small boys followed him with open-mouthed wonder, as he trudged along through the street towards the mayor's residence.

Arriving at the mayor's mansion he knocked for admittance. The door was opened by a servant who stared wildly at the strange appearance he made.

"I want to see Dame Heinrich," he said to the servant.

"I am here, good man," said the dame, coming forward. "What is it you would have?"

Rip looked her straight in the face, and she returned his gaze.

"You know me not," he said, huskily. "Here is some fresh bear meat killed on the mountains this morning. It is sent to you by a friend. I would see Katrina Heinrich, the maiden who loved Rip Van Winkle."

With a slight scream on hearing that beloved name Katrina sprang towards the door and gazed into the bearded face as if her soul were in her eyes.

CHAPTER X.

THE LOVERS FACE TO FACE.

Rip returned the gaze of the fair Katrina with tenfold interest. His heart bounded up in his throat at the sight of that loved face—the sound of that sweet voice.

As they gazed at each other a look of disappointment came over her fair face.

"Did you know Rip Van Winkle?" she asked, after a long pause.

"Yes, I know him well," said Rip, his voice trembling with emotion.

Instantly Katrina sprang forward, ragged and unkempt as he was, and seized him by the arm, pulling him inside the door.

"You say you *know* him!" she almost shrieked. "Does he live?"

"Yes, he lives," replied Rip, sinking into a chair that stood just inside the doorway.

"Mother—mother—he lives!" gasped Katrina, clasping both hands over her heart and sinking down at the feet of the ragged old stranger in a death-like swoon.

"Mine Gott!" screamed the mother, "my child is dead—my child is dead!"

Such an occurrence in the house of the mayor necessarily caused a commotion, not only in the household, but throughout the town.

Servants rushed to and fro, one going for a physician and another for the nearest neighbor.

She was taken up and carried into a chamber and laid on a bed, where restoratives were given and applied. In the meantime Rip was shown into the kitchen, where his old, ragged garments attracted no little attention from the servants.

"I am half famished," he said, as the rich food that was being prepared for the mayor's table passed before him.

One of the servants—a pretty young girl—filled a large plate for him, which he ate with the voracity of a half-famished wolf.

"Poor man, you must indeed be hungry!" said the young girl.

"I have been starved," said he, as he ate.

"Who starved you?"

"I have been lost in the mountains," was the reply.

"Why did you bring this bear meat here?" she asked.

"As a present to the mayor, and because I wanted to see her whom Rip Van Winkle loved."

"Did you really know him?" the young girl asked, her curiosity now aroused to the highest pitch.

"Yes, I knew him well. His home has been with me in the mountains these long years."

"And he is yet alive?"

"Yes."

"Oh, my! We have all heard the wonderful story as a romance—a dream of the past—and now he yet lives! Why does he not return and claim his bride?—for Katrina loves him, oh, so much!"

"Alas, he is poor, worn and in rags—who will believe his story? Who would look upon him and say 'that is Rip Van Winkle'?"

The sadness in his tones impressed the young girl, and she was about to question him further when she was called by one of the other

servants to aid in waiting on the table. She ran away, saying she would see him again.

Very soon after that old Peter Heinrich himself, now grown older and stouter, came into the kitchen to see him.

"My good man," said he, seating himself by our hero's side, "you seem to have seen some hard times."

"Yes, I've been exposed to wind and rain a long time," replied Rip, scrutinizing the old man from head to foot.

"You killed a bear this morning, did you not?"

"I did."

"And brought me the two hams?"

"I did."

"I am glad of it, for I am very fond of bear ham; but you must let me pay you the market price for them."

"I will not."

"Why not? I am rich, and you—"

"I am very poor; but the last time you saw Rip Van Winkle was when he gave you two venison hams. You went to the mountain with him, and got the shoulders of the deer. Do you remember that night?"

"Indeed I do; but—but who are you, my man?"

"I am the friend of Rip Van Winkle. He lives, and will some day come to claim your daughter."

"He can have her any day he comes, for she is now her own mistress. But where is he now—where has he been all these long years?"

"He will tell his story for himself. I came merely to see if Katrina was still true to him."

"True! She has never ceased to think of and pray for his return since the day he went away."

"He will rejoice at that. He loves her still, but he is still as poor as when he went away."

"I expected that, for he would never work. I don't think it would make any difference with Katrina, however, as she has a good sum of money laid away. Rip would never work, you know."

"Yes, but I think he has since learned that work must be done, or he would starve."

"I am glad of that. I am afraid I shall have to go back to the plow again in my old age."

Rip looked up in evident surprise, and old Peter proceeded to explain.

"Over a hundred years ago one of my ancestors in Hesse-Cassel, a wonderful old dame named Katrina Von Heinrich—"

"Katrina Von Heinrich!" exclaimed Rip, springing out of the chair. "Hesse-Cassel?"

"Yes," said old Peter, amazed at the effect of his communication on the stranger. "What know you of her?"

"Nothing—nothing," replied Rip; "go on—what about Katrina Von Heinrich, of Hesse-Cassel?"

"She once owned all this land around Shadyside for miles and miles; but when she died the grant by right of which she held title to the land could not be found among her effects. She was found murdered one night. Since then the papers have never been seen or heard of, and the lands went to other parties by right of purchase or settlement. But now a man who claims to have papers that give him all the lands on the side of the mountains has commenced a suit to dispossess all of us. I know not how it will end."

"Are you the direct heir of Katrina Von Heinrich?"

"I am the only living heir."

"Then you will not be dispossessed!" said Rip, with an emphasis that startled old Peter.

"Do you know anything about the case?" the mayor asked, in no little surprise.

"I think I do," was the reply.

"Who are you—what is your name?"

"That I don't hardly know myself, but it will not matter much. I will go now, to return again."

"But you must tell me your name before—"

"I cannot—I am not what I seem—may not be what I claim," replied Rip, pushing the old man aside, and passing from the kitchen to the front steps of the house, where he had left the bearskin. Old Peter Heinrich pursued him, saying:

"Here, my good man, you must let me pay you for those bear hams—I cannot take—"

"No!" said the dilapidated stranger, waving him off with a determined gesture of the hand. "I want no pay," and taking up the bearskin he strode away without uttering another word.

Down into the business part of the town Rip succeeded in getting a good price for his bearskin. Securing the money in a pocket which he found still intact in his pants, he wandered about the streets, along which he had played in boyhood and youth. Hundreds of boys and girls followed him about, wondering why he wore his hair so long, his clothes so ragged, and carried the old rusty gun barrel in his hand. They had all heard the pathetic story of Rip Van Winkle and Katrina Heinrich, but they little dreamed that they were now following the veritable Rip about the streets of his native place.

Night came on and the children retired to their homes, leaving the dilapidated stranger to wander alone about the streets. As on the night when he was so ruthlessly driven from home, dark storm-clouds swept over the town. The wind mournfully sighed through the tall trees and shrieked around chimney corners. Now, as then, he had not where to lay his head. He sat down on the curbstone and rested his chin on his hands.

"Am I Rip Van Winkle?" he muttered, "or am I not? Am I awake, or do I still slumber up in the mountains among those silent Dutch-

men? If I am awake I ought to know myself and have my dog with me. If asleep, it is merely a dream from which I will awake up soon, and——"

A woman with a shawl thrown over her head rushed past him, hurrying as if to reach home before the storm-cloud should burst. She stepped so close to him that her dress touched him and caused him to look around with a start.

CHAPTER XI.

RIP MEETS HIS FATHER.

THAT woman was his mother—Dame Van Winkle.

Katrina Heinrich, on recovering from her swoon, found that the dilapidated stranger had left her father's house and was wandering about the town. She could not rest easy in her bed under such circumstances.

The news that Rip still lived gave new life to her hopes.

She trembled with joy unspeakable, and she resolved to see and talk with the stranger again.

Summoning two of the household servants to her side, she sent one of them in search of the stranger, and the other waited till she could write a note to Dame Van Winkle.

Though she hated old Fritz Van Winkle with an undying hate, Katrina loved Dame Van Winkle as though she were her own mother. Her first thought on recovering consciousness after her swoon was of Rip's mother, hence she wrote:

"MY DEAR FRIEND—I have just seen an old man who says that our Rip still lives, that he knows him and that he will come back to us. He is gone now, but I have sent for him. Yours ever,

"KATRINA."

Good Dame Van Winkle was not at home when the servant arrived with the note—nor did she get the note until some time after dark. Its contents startled her. Her heart welled up with all a mother's love for her boy, and she hastened to see Katrina and ask her more about the stranger, notwithstanding the threatening storm-cloud. Wrapping a shawl about her head and shoulders, she set out for the mayor's residence. On the way she passed Rip sitting on the curbstone, with his chin resting on his hands.

Rip looked after the retreating form of the woman until she was lost to sight in the gathering gloom.

"If I am really awake," he muttered to himself, "then I have been sleeping ten years. If I have slept ten years, it must have been caused by the schnapps those strange fellows gave me that night.

"They were the strangest set of fellows I ever met with in my life, particularly that old hunchback. But if I have been sleeping ten years, how have I lived during all that time? Can a man live ten years without food, even though he is sleeping all that time? It can't be so; yet everything looks that way to me. My dog was gone when I woke up; my clothes nearly rotted off me; my gun rusted and ruined; my game-bag in shreds, and hanging up out of my reach, as the tree had grown higher since I hung it there. When I laid down I was a beardless boy. When I wake up, I have a beard a foot long, and a voice like a man, which sounds strange to my ears. If I am not Rip, who then am I? But I am Rip Van Winkle, for I recognized my Katrina; my heart bounded up in my throat at sight of her sweet face. But I cannot go to her in this garb. I am too poor—who would believe me when I would say I had gone away and slept for ten years? The whole world would laugh at me—and even Katrina, with all her love for me, would think me crazy. No—no. I will go away again—work, make money, and then come back and claim my Katrina. She will wait and be true to the last. She will never forget her Rip—my Katrina—you—have never forgotten me?" and as he spoke, a sob escaped him; his heart was touched by the deathless devotion of the faithful Katrina. Tears trickled down his bronzed cheeks, and he sat there unmoved for several minutes, till the storm-cloud burst, and the rain came down in torrents.

"I will go by the old home," he said, rising to his feet, "and see my mother's face once more. I cannot go away without seeing her."

He wended his way in the drenching rain toward the old homestead of the Van Winkles.

Old Fritz had grown very rich by selling off portions of his farm for town lots as the city built up in that direction. Like many others of a similar temperament, the old man had grown selfish and miserly the richer he became, until he cared for nothing but his money. He was just thinking of his good fortune in having so few mouths to feed, and several times congratulated himself that Rip was no longer a burden on him, when a loud knocking on the door startled him.

"Somebody ish out in dot shtorm," said the old man, arising and with pipe in his hand, opening the door.

Rip entered, dripping with water, and father and son stood face to face.

The long beard, ragged clothes and old, rusty gun barrel alarmed the old Dutchman, who stared as though the ghost of one of his ancestors stood before him.

"Vat you wants mit dis house, eh?" he asked, as soon as he recovered his speech.

"I want nothing of this house," said Rip, with great dignity. "I simply want to see my mother."

"Your mudder!" gasped old Fritz. "Mine Gott in Himmel, dot is Rip—py tam!"

"Yes, I am your son Rip," said the stranger, calmly.

"Py tam!" and the avaricious old Dutchman gazed at him from head to foot. "Vere you been all dis time, eh?"

"I've been asleep."

"Py tam—dat's so—you go shleep mit der dogs—you shleep mitout vork all der times. Git oud mit mine house, you tam goot for nodings! Go shleep it'oud mid you lazy bones—or mit Katrina—get oud, I say!"

"Look here, old man," said Rip, coolly looking the old man in the face, "you struck me and drove me from my home when I was a lad. Since that time I've never called you 'father' and never will again. But if you strike me now I will choke half your meanness out of you. I have come back to see my mother and see her I will."

"Gid oud mine house!" roared the old man, seizing him by the arm, and attempting to push him towards the door. Rip very quietly took hold of his shoulders and crushed him down into a chair as though he were only a ten-year-old boy, so great was his physical strength.

"Now you keep quiet or I'll wring your neck for you!" said Rip, leaving him trembling with terror in the chair, and proceeding to go through the house in search of his mother. As is known to the reader, Dame Van Winkle was at that moment with Katrina Heinrich.

Failing to find his mother, Rip came back to where his father was sitting, and asked:

"Where is my mother?"

"She went oud mid der neighbors und can't come home mid der shtorm."

"Well, I shall not wait to see her. Only tell me—is she well?"

"Yaash, dot ish so."

"That's enough. I will not come to you again, old man. You will come to me when we meet again," and with that he passed out into the storm as he had done ten years before.

"Mine Gott!" gasped the Dutchman, springing up and fastening the door. "Dot Rip ish von tam highway robber, und ish so shtrong as a bull. He comes not here any more, py tam!"

Fritz bolted the door, and nailed down the windows, so great was his fear of the son whom he had so badly treated.

Rip wended his way through the town towards the mountain, resolving to spend the night among the crags rather than remain in the town where his presence created so much excitement. His mind was a whirlwind of uncertainty as to what he should do.

"Katrina is true—that I know," he murmured, "and my mother will never forget her only boy. I will go back only when I have found the package of papers which were hidden in the old tree near where I met those fellows up there among the crags. I've an idea that those papers have something to do with old Peter Heinrich—that it will make Katrina the richest woman in the State. I can then hold up my head and look the old man in the face. I'll go right back there and hunt for those papers."

CHAPTER XII.

THE FIGHT WITH THE HUNCHBACK.

As on that eventful night ten years before, Rip wended his way up the mountain side, the rain ceasing as he climbed higher, and the rays of a full moon breaking through the drifting clouds. Higher and higher he climbed until he reached the spot where he rescued Katrina ten years ago. He sat down there and rested—not that he was tired, but because the spot was dear to his memory. The moonbeams gleamed on the tablet which Katrina had caused to be erected there to his memory, and he again read the inscription which her love had dictated.

But he did not remain there long. He thought of an overhanging shelf of rock under which he could find shelter. It was there he would sleep for the night.

He arose, took up the old rusty gun barrel, which he still carried in his right hand, and trudged along further up the mountain.

Ere long he came to the very spot where his faithful Karl made such strenuous efforts to turn him back, but without avail.

"Poor Karl," murmured Rip, as the memory of the faithful dog came back to him. "Where is he now? Is he dead or only sleeping somewhere? I wish I knew, for I miss him very much. He was the best friend I ever had. He never found any fault with me; he never drove me from him, but went with me everywhere. Poor Karl."

Rip looked around and found the overhanging shelf under which he proposed to sleep during the night, and was about to go under it, when his attention was attracted by approaching footsteps. He stopped and listened.

Tramp—tramp—tramp!

"Ha!" ejaculated Rip, as the same old hunchback who approached him ten years before, came in sight with the two kegs hung on either side of the curious hump on his back. "I know that chap. Halloo, old Humpy, how goes it?"

At the sound of his voice the old hunchback stopped, but one of the kegs rolled away from him. He made a grab at it, but it rolled right up to Rip's foot. Rip raised his foot and gave it a kick that sent it rolling back with considerable force against the old hunchback's shin. He dropped the other keg, and stooped to rub his leg, as though it had been badly bruised by the keg.

"Oh, that won't do, Humpy," said Rip, laughing heartily, "that didn't hurt you for a cent. If it did, I am very sorry, for I have no desire to hurt any one."

The old hunchback uttered a groan, bared his leg, and showed Rip a severe bruise on his shin, just where the keg had struck.

"By thunder!" exclaimed Rip, "I am sorry for that, old man. I really didn't mean it."

The old hunchback said not a word, but tried to take up one of the

kegs and put it on his shoulder. He tried several times, groaning and limping all the time, as though his leg pained him very much.

"I'll help you up with it," said Rip, taking up the keg and placing it on the old hunchback's shoulder.

But no sooner did he stoop to pick up the second one, than the old man let the first one fall to the ground. Rip good-naturedly picked it up again; but the other one dropped the minute the old man tried to take it from him.

"I guess you had better leave one here, old Humpy," suggested Rip, "and come back after it. You can't carry but one, that's plain."

The old man shook his head, and made signs to Rip to take it up and bring it along with him.

"Excuse me, Humpy," said Rip, with a smile, "but you haven't got a keen boy in tow this time."

The old man motioned him to take up the keg and follow him, this time in a very positive manner.

Rip placed his thumb to his nose, and gave a significant vibratory motion to the hand, that was even more expressive than language. The old man let his keg drop, which rolled against Rip's feet, mashing them rather unpleasantly.

"I'll take care of that keg, old man," said Rip, seizing and raising it above his head; "you needn't be troubled about this any more," and then he dashed it against the rocks with terrific force. It did not break, but bounded like a ball, and rolled over the edge of the precipice down into the great chasm, bounding from crag to crag, resounding louder and louder as it descended till it struck the bottom, where it made a report like a cannon, echoing and re-echoing from crag to crag, rolling over the mountain like a long peal of thunder.

"What the devil was in it, anyhow?" Rip asked, turning to the old hunchback.

But the old man glared at him like an enraged tiger about to spring upon him.

"Ah, it's no use, Humpy," he said, laughing. "I ain't afraid of you nor your whole crowd of stingy Dutchmen!"

With an angry growl, the old hunchback sprang upon him, clutching at his throat with his long, claw-like fingers. Rip dropped his gun barrel and caught him on the eye with a blow straight from the shoulder. The hunchback staggered under the blow, seeming half dazed by the effect of it.

"Ha, ha, ha, Humpy!" chuckled Rip; "you can't play any more of your Dutch games on me. You did it once—oh, ho—that's the game, eh?"

The hunchback had seized a huge rock and hurled it at him. Rip caught it in both hands and hurled it back at him. Humpy dodged it and sprang upon him again, his eyes flashing that greenish light that is seen in an enraged tiger's eyes. Rip caught him, and then commenced a terrific struggle. The strength of the old hunchback was something wonderful. But Rip had not slept for ten years for nothing. It seemed that while he slept nature gave him muscles of iron, for he grappled with his assailant like a giant, and hurled him from him as though he had been but a mere child.

"Get out, you and your infernal schnapps!" yelled Rip, now thoroughly aroused, seizing the keg and hurling it at the old man. He dodged it, and the keg went over the brink of the chasm, bounding from crag to crag with increasing echoes that reverberated like thunder through the mountains.

With a demon-like screech, the hunchback sprang at him again. Rip closed with him and the struggle went on, the two moving gradually towards the brink of the chasm. The old man made a frantic effort to leap over the brink with Rip.

"Over you go, then!" hissed Rip, hurling him over the awful abyss. The hunchback carried a portion of Rip's coat, the rottenness of the garment saving his life.

With a demoniacal howl that awoke up all the echoes of the mountain, the old man disappeared down the abyss, and Rip turned away with a shudder.

"He would have it so," he said. "I didn't want to hurt him, but he wouldn't let me alone. I wouldn't let him play me any more tricks. He was a strong man, but I was stronger, or it would have been up with me."

Rip retired to the overhanging rock, picked up his gun barrel, and then laid himself down to sleep. The excitement of his fight with the hunchback kept him awake for some time; but he slept at last.

When he woke up the sun was shining brightly in his face, but the whole mountain was covered a foot deep in snow!

"Mine Gott!" he exclaimed, glaring around him in undisguised amazement. "It was just the turn of summer into autumn when I laid down, and now here it is midwinter, the ground covered with snow! Can it be that I have slept another ten years, or only a few months! My beard is still black—not a gray hair in it. I can't have slept very long, judging from that, yet it's winter, that's certain. I am as hungry as a wolf, though, and—halloo, that's a rabbit!" whack! "mine, by jingo!"

Suddenly striking out with his old gun barrel he struck a rabbit that tried to run by him, and killed it, built a fire, cooked and ate it for a breakfast.

This done, he laid the gun barrel over his shoulder, and boldly started out in search of the path that led down into the valley of silence. In an hour's time he found it, and carefully feeling his way he passed down along the face of the precipice towards the little dale where he had met the silent revelers ten years previous. Patiently he struggled along, till at last he reached the bottom. To his astonishment he found the hunchbacks were drinking schnapps, the same as

when he first saw them. As he approached them they all turned and glared angrily at him, black scowls greeting him on all sides.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VALLEY OF SILENCE—THE FATE OF THE HUNCHBACK.

Rip suddenly stopped and returned the gaze of the scowling, silent Dutchmen.

He had reason to fear them, for the hunchback, whom he had hurled over the precipice, stood there in their midst, looking as angry as the maddest of them.

Clutching his gun-barrel tightly in his left hand, he stood silent and determined before them, as though defying the whole crowd.

They stood thus facing each other full ten minutes, until Rip at last, thinking the gazing was becoming monotonous, said:

"How are you, Humpy? Glad to see you alive, though I didn't expect ever to see you again. How the deuce did you escape, anyhow?"

Of course no reply was made to him, and he added:

"Oh, well, I ain't anxious to associate with you fellows, nobow. You're all too darned sleepy-headed here to suit me!" and with that he turned away to search for the tree in the hollow of which he saw the mysterious old woman conceal the package of papers. He examined several trees, and failing to find a cavity in any of them, he turned again to gaze at his surroundings.

One of the Dutchmen rose up, and deliberately walking up to him, offered him a mug of fragrant schnapps.

Rip looked at the mug, and then at the old bronzed, weather-beaten Dutchman.

"Thank you, old man," he said, shaking his head, "but I've sworn off since the last time we drank together. Your schnapps is very fine, but life is too short for me to drink it."

The Dutchman made a sign of impatience and thrust the mug close under Rip's nose.

"Yes, it smells good," said Rip, with a good-natured smile, "but I ain't drinking any more—I've sworn off."

The Dutchman pushed the mug against his lips, as though he intended either to force the contents down his throat or else subject him to a temptation he could not resist. He took the mug out of the silent Dutchman's hand and deliberately poured its contents out on the ground.

A groan escaped the entire party, and each man of them sprang forward, as if they would attack him.

"Back, you sleepy-headed drones!" cried Rip, clubbing his gun-barrel and swinging it defiantly above his head.

"The man who touches me will never drink any more schnapps!"

But they heeded not his threat. They leaned over the little spot of moist earth and gazed at it as though each particle were more precious than diamonds. Some touched it with their fingers and quickly placed them between their lips.

"Eat the dirt," said Rip, sarcastically, "and then you'll get it all. Men as stingy as you are ought to live on dirt, because it's cheap."

Angry glances were cast at him, and excited gestures, flashing eyes and moving lips told him that they were discussing the situation. But never a word could Rip hear. The silence of death seemed to settle over the little valley.

Suddenly one of the Dutchmen, a sour-visaged old fellow, advanced and made an insulting gesture almost under Rip's nose.

Quick as the lightning's flash Rip gave him a blow on the side of the head that sent him spinning away like a top.

"Try that again if you like the fun," said Rip, in a very quiet tone of voice.

But ere he finished speaking, the old Dutchman kept spinning around and around until he disappeared out of sight, to Rip's utter astonishment.

"Donder und blitzen!" he muttered. "I must have hit him hard. But you can't kill one of those fellows, or that hunchback would not be over there by that keg of schnapps!"

One of the others threw his mug at him; but he caught it and tossed it back at him—tossed it hard—and hit him on the stomach, doubling him up like a jack-knife. He too went spinning around and around till he disappeared as the first one did.

"Well, there goes another one," said Rip, laughing. "They can't stand much of a blow. I wonder if they will all go spinning away like that? I've a mind to try it."

Taking up a small stone, he cast it at one of the silent figures, striking him on the breast. Instantly he began to spin around and around, going further and further away until he, too, was lost to sight.

"What the duyvil does it mean!" exclaimed Rip, in dumfounded amazement. "Such a queer lot I never did see. They are all scared half to death, and—halloo, here comes another!"

A stalwart Dutchman darted toward him with his heavy drinking cup raised above his head, as though he would brain Rip on the spot. But Rip caught his arm, and with his other hand dealt him a tremendous slap on the left cheek. Away went he, spinning around and around on his heels at a terrific rate.

Rip looked on in amused satisfaction.

"Well, old fellow, if that whirling around don't make you dizzy, then you have no brains in your head. Spin away, as that is all you seem good for—eh! you want to spin, too—take that!" and giving another one a slap on the head as he tried to strike him with his mug, he sent him spinning away with the others.

Then, as if driven to desperation, the others, some half a score in

number, made a combined attack on him. He sprang aside and gave two or three a blow each in quick succession, sending them whirling and dancing away in a comical procession, all going in the same direction.

By a wonderful presence of mind he kept clear of their clutches and gave each a blow that sent them spinning away the moment they came within reach of him. In a few minutes he was alone with only one—the old hunchback whom he had once thrown over the precipice of the great chasm.

"Ha, ha, ha, Humpy, old boy!" laughed Rip, as he stood facing the deformed old Dutchman. "Here we are again, the duyvil to pay and no pitch hot! Tell me how you escaped being killed on the rocks out there and we'll shake hands and be friends, eh?"

The old hunchback looked at the proffered hand, but did not take it. He backed off toward his keg of schnapps, which lay on a ledge of rock a few paces behind him.

"Hanged if you fellows ain't the queerest, most stingy and unsociable set I ever met with," muttered Rip, gazing at the old hunchback in a puzzled sort of way. "You played a scurvy sort of trick with your sleepy-headed schnapps, but I don't bear you any ill will. But see here, I want you to answer me one or two questions, and then you may go where you please. Do you know anything about old Dame Von Heinrich—Katrina Von Heinrich—why, what in donder and blitzen is the matter with you, eh? Hanged if you don't look as though you were drying up to a bunch of sole leather! I say, how about the old woman and her papers? She hid them in a tree somewhere hereabouts, and now I can't find the tree. If you know anything about her, say so like a man, and Rip Van Winkle is your friend ever after."

But the old hunchback made no reply. He seated himself astride of his keg, and suddenly began to grow old with a rapidity that startled Rip. His hair dropped off his head in bunches of a dozen silver-gray hairs at a time, and his teeth dropped from his mouth and rolled on the ground at his feet. His skin changed to a tan color, and his face to a mass of wrinkles.

"If you can talk any, old man," continued Rip, watching the unaccountable changes going on in the old hunchback, "you had better tell me all you know about the old woman before you get too-old, for I'll be hanged if you don't grow old faster than anybody I ever saw."

But the old man grew old and weaker until he was all bent over so that he was utterly unable to raise his head.

Still Rip continued to talk with him for nearly an hour. At last the form of the old man suddenly crumbled to a pile of dust and ashes at Rip's feet.

"Ten thousand duyvils!" exclaimed Rip, starting back. "He's dead as a rusty nail, and nothing is left but a pile of dust and ashes! What strange fatality must hang over this place! I wish I was safely out of it. Everything is so like a horrible dream that I hardly know whether to stay or leave at once. I must get that package of papers, though, before I go, and it must be somewhere about here. I remember the very spot where I slept so long, and that ought to be the tree over there where the old woman concealed it, though it seems to have been twisted considerably by the storms of a hundred years. Ha! that is the very tree! There is the knot hole, higher up, but the one, nevertheless."

Rip hurried away from the spot where the old hunchback had crumbled to dust, and hastened toward a large gnarled, twisted old tree which stood a little way off to the left. Under it he stopped and glanced around, as if measuring the surroundings.

"Yes," he muttered, "this must be the tree, and there is the hollow where she thrust the package. I'll climb up this and see, anyhow," and dropping the rusty old gun barrel to the ground he commenced to climb the tree. He soon reached the lower limbs, upon which he stood erect and peeped into the knot hole in the main trunk. He could see nothing.

He thrust his hand in it up to his elbow.

With a cry of joy he drew forth a package of something enclosed in a dingy sheet of waxed paper.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE OLD HOME AGAIN.

"Gott in Himmel!" gasped Rip, as he held up the time-eaten package and gazed at it. "If this is the package Katrina will be the richest woman in the county and my story will be believed. I'll get down and look at it."

Holding the package between his teeth, he descended to the ground as quickly as possible. He did not stop to inspect the package, for to him it seemed the very package the mysterious dame displayed to him ten years before.

"This is the package," he said to himself a dozen times, as he tried to conceal it among his clothing. "If I get out of this place I'll soon find out, anyhow. If those silent schnapps drinkers should come back and find out I had the package they'd give me some trouble, though they may all have gone off for good, or crumbled to dust and ashes as old Humpy did, for aught I know."

Taking up his faithful old gun barrel, he proceeded to leave the silent valley, making for the entrance at the foot of the crags at a brisk pace. To find the path by which he came required a little time, as foot-prints in the snow led in every direction. Some evidently led to certain destruction, for more dangerous places could not be found in the mountains than some of those to which the foot-prints led.

"Oh, no," muttered Rip, as he stopped and scanned the face of the craggy heights, "this is the way I came. They've tried to mislead

me by those tracks, but I will fool 'em this time," and boldly striking out through the snow he succeeded in finding the true path, where he recognized his own tracks. Pushing on he soon reached the top of the chasm.

"Safe at last!" he exclaimed, as he stepped away from the brow of the precipice. "I would not go back down there for half the world if Katrina was not in it. Those Dutchmen are the strangest set of fellows I ever heard of. Some of 'em must be at least two hundred years old, judging from their looks. Old Humpy just dried up to dust and ashes right before my face, and the others went dancing away on the slightest blow."

Rip now hastened down the mountain side in the direction of the spot where he had made himself famous by the daring rescue of Katrina Heinrich. Notwithstanding the fact that the snow lay nearly a foot deep on the ground, and a cold wind swept across the mountain, he felt not the least discomfort from the cold. Much of his person was exposed through his ragged garments, yet it seemed that the snow of ten winters had hardened him so thoroughly that heat and cold were alike indifferent to him.

Reaching the place of the rescue, he seated himself on one of the many seats arranged there, and pulled out the object to examine it. It was wrapped in oiled, or waxed paper, so as to keep out the dampness. Inside the package were quite a number of papers in both the German and English languages, yellow from age, all bearing official seals. On the back of each was the name of "Katrina von Heinrich, of Hesse-Cassel."

"Gott in Himmel!" cried Rip, springing up and dancing about in the snow like a half-crazed schoolboy; that's her name—she told me it herself! I'll go and make myself known to Katrina, and give her the papers."

For the first time since waking out of his long sleep of ten years, Rip showed some degree of excitement. He strode down the mountain's side as though in pursuit of something. In two hours more he reached the town, or rather city, of Shadyside, the place of his birth, and wended his way along the main street toward the mayor's residence.

A ragged old man in the dead of winter, carrying an old gun barrel in one hand, and a yellowish-looking package in the other, could not fail to attract attention. Hundreds of boys, men, and women recognized him as the stranger whom they saw there three months before.

"Oh, I know you!" cried a small boy running alongside of him.

"You do?" asked Rip, suddenly stopping and gazing down at the boy; "who, then, am I?"

"You are the man who brought the mayor two bear hams three months ago, and said you knew Rip Van Winkle. Everybody has been looking for you since then."

"Three months ago!" exclaimed Rip, his face, voice, and manner betraying excitement. "Then I must have slept three whole months on the mountain before going down into the silent valley."

"They've been looking for me, you say?" he asked of the boy.

"Oh, yes, sir, everybody has been looking out for you. Miss Katrina Heinrich says she'll give any one a thousand dollars to find you."

"Mine Gott!" muttered Rip.

"Yes, sir, and the mayor says he'll give another thousand."

"Ugh! I'm in luck!" and Rip chuckled in delight at the information given by the small boy. "What did Rip's father say about it, eh?"

"Oh, he says Rip is no good, and he doesn't believe what you said was true."

"He don't, eh?" and Rip's face clouded. "Well, we'll see if I am not right," and again he proceeded toward the residence of the mayor. The boys accompanied him all the way.

At the house his presence created quite a flutter among the domestics. They all recognized him, but only one had the courage and kindness of heart to take him by the hand and lead him to a seat by the fire. It was the pretty maid servant with whom he conversed so freely on the occasion of his first visit there.

"They're all at the court-house, sir," said the girl, as she showed him to a seat, "to hear the trial of the great lawsuit."

"Indeed! and how goes the trial?" he asked.

"It seems as if it will go hard against master and all the neighbors," said the girl. "But are you not cold and hungry, sir?"

"Quite hungry, but not in the least cold, my dear," said he, cheerfully, at which the maid flushed and proceeded to give him a hearty meal of cold victuals from the cupboard.

He ate heartily, and then turned to the maid.

"I'll go down to the court-house and see the master. I won't forget you, lass," and taking the gun barrel, which answered for a staff, he left the house and made his way towards the court-house where the great suit was pending. Nearly every landowner in Shadyside and the country for miles around were in danger of losing their entire property.

Rip's presence at the court created considerable surprise; the crowd gave way for him to pass into the court-room. The room was crowded with the best people of the town, among whom were mothers and daughters, who had come to learn whether they were to continue to live in plenty or lose all. His entrance caused many to look around.

"There he is! There he is!" cried Katrina Heinrich, springing to her feet and pointing toward our hero, interrupting the court by her sudden exclamations.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

THE judge, jury and lawyers stared first at Katrina Heinrich, the mayor's daughter, and then at the strange-looking object at which she was pointing. Rip stood still and gazed first at Katrina and then at the throng around him. Every eye was upon him.

"What means this interruption of the court?" demanded the judge, severely.

"My son—my son!" cried Dame Van Winkle, springing up from her seat by Katrina's side, and darting over to where Rip was standing. "Do you know where my son, Rip Van Winkle, is? Speak, for the love of Gott!"

"Yes, I know where he is," slowly replied Rip, "and you shall see him before yonder sun shall set behind the mountains."

Dame Van Winkle clasped her hands over her heart, and burst into tears of joy.

Everybody present was familiar with the story of Rip Van Winkle and Katrina Heinrich, and for a time the proceedings of the court were interrupted entirely.

The people who had crowded around Rip resumed their seats, leaving the tall stranger standing alone in the center of the room. Old Fritz Van Winkle sat near by, scowling upon him as though he would like to crush him under his feet. Rip returned his gaze and smiled contemptuously at him.

Suddenly the mayor, the father of Katrina, advanced to his side, took his hand and whispered in his ear:

"You said I need have no fears about this suit. You see it is going against me. What shall I do? Do you know anything about it?"

"I do. Have your lawyer call me to the witness stand."

Old Peter Heinrich beckoned to his lawyer and told him what the stranger had said.

"Who is he, and what does he know?" the lawyer asked.

"That I don't know—he will tell all on the stand I guess."

The lawyer called him to the stand, and Rip walked forward amid a death-like silence, and took the stand.

"What is your name, sir?" was the first question asked.

"My name is Rip Van Winkle," was the reply, which fell upon the court and spectators like a clap of thunder.

With wild screams Dame Van Winkle and Katrina Heinrich sprang forward, passed the lawyers and the jury, and, seizing him by the hands, looked him full in the face.

"You, my son!" gasped the mother.

"You, my Rip!" cried Katrina.

"I am," calmly replied Rip. "You both know the marks on my arm—name them."

"My son had a long scar on his left arm," said the eager mother.

"And the letter 'K' just below that, pricked in India ink by myself," said Katrina.

"There they are—behold them!" and Rip bared his arm to the gaze of the whole court, showing the marks with clear distinctness.

"My son—my own boy!" cried the mother, clasping him to her heart and covering his bearded face with kisses.

Katrina nearly fainted, she leaning against the railing for support.

Dame Van Winkle released him and dropped into a seat near by. Rip turned his eyes full upon Katrina. She looked up a moment in silence, and then, with a glad cry, sprang into his outstretched arms.

"My poor Rip!" she cried, loud enough for all to hear, "you have suffered as well as I; but I love you. I love you still with all my—"

"Py tam!" exclaimed old Fritz Van Winkle, who was a quiet spectator of the scene, "you takes him mit you; he comes not mit my house no more all de times, de tam good for noddings!"

"Old man," said Rip, coolly. "I shall never more enter the door whence I was driven like a dog. Forget that you ever had a son, as I have long ago ceased to have a father."

"Rip—Rip, my boy!" cried Dame Van Winkle, again springing up and catching hold of his arm, "don't quarrel with your father."

"I have no father, mother."

"Am I a widow, then?" she asked.

"It were better that you were than to be tied to—"

"Py tam!" roared the irascible old Fritz, "I preak your tam good for noddings head!"

"Silence in court!" yelled the sheriff.

"What has all this to do with the case?" the judge asked. "I see that the long lost Rip Van Winkle has turned up at last, and I am glad of it for his Honor, the mayor's daughter's sake. But what connection has he with this case?"

"He will explain that in his evidence," said the lawyer.

"Let him do so, then."

Rip then proceeded, under oath, to tell his wonderful story of the finding of the papers establishing the right of Peter Heinrich to all the land the other party was suing for. That seemed to stagger the court. The papers were produced.

The authenticity could not be doubted.

The great seals were all there, together with all the other papers necessary to establish a complete title.

Instead of merely saving what he already had, old Peter Heinrich found himself the undisputed owner of all the land in the city, and for miles around it, valued at several millions of dollars.

"The court will take the papers and investigate them before rendering a decision," said the judge, and Rip forthwith turned them over to the judge.

When Rip left the stand hundreds crowded around him to congratulate him on his safe return. Katrina leaned proudly on his arm, and said that his ragged garments were prettier in her eyes than the robes of a king.

He told his story of the ten years' nap, to which the judge, who had dismissed the court, lawyers and jury listened with the most intense interest. Everybody was amazed.

They took his gun and examined it.

Its rust-eaten condition seemed to corroborate the wonderful story, and the women who examined his clothing said it had been exposed to wind and rain for several years. His hair and beard attested the same thing, and all regarded him with awe.

Old Fritz Van Winkle remained near enough in the crowd to hear the story, and swore it was a lie.

He hated Rip because the papers he had brought into court stripped him of all his real estate and enriched the man he envied and secretly hated.

"Judge," said Katrina, "come to our house at once and marry us. Our engagement has lasted long enough—eh, Rip?"

"Yes, darling; but will you take me in such poverty as this?"

"Have you not just brought me millions, Rip? You have just made papa the wealthiest man in the State. I am his oldest, youngest and only child, and heir to all he possesses. As my husband you shall be the owner of all. I only ask your love."

"That you have had during all these long years, darling," said Rip, stooping and kissing her and his mother.

The judge led the procession to the mayor's residence, where he married Rip to Katrina in the presence of a gaping multitude. Rip was still dressed in his tatters, yet his eyes evinced the happiness he felt.

His mother embraced the happy bride, and said she had always loved her as a daughter, but now she was doubly dear to her.

In two hours from then he was married, a new suit of fine clothes was given him, and the skillful manipulations of a barber so wrought a change in his appearance that those who saw him married could scarcely believe that he was the same man.

"Now you are my own handsome Rip of ten years ago!" cried Katrina, throwing her arms about his neck and kissing him with passionate tenderness. His mother hugged and kissed him a dozen times, and then returned to her home.

The maddest man in Shadyside was old Fritz Van Winkle. He sat and cursed himself by the hour, for he had rejected Rip in open court, and still again three months before that, and now he was son-in-law to the mayor and the richest man in the State, whilst he, the unforgiving father, was stripped of almost everything in his old age.

One day he met young Rip on the street. He would not have known him but for a friend who pointed him out. The new clothes and the barber had made another man of him.

"Rip—my son," he said, offering his hand, "let us be friends some more as never vas, eh?"

Rip looked the hard-hearted old man full in the face and said:

"No. Had good fortune not come to me you would not have given me either shelter or a crust of bread. If you come to poverty I will help you, but will never recognize you as my father."

The old man swore a huge Dutch oath and passed on, leaving his son Rip with his bride, who had loved him through good and evil report.

Years have flown by since then, and Katrina has several little Rips growing around her, to whom she relates the wonderful story of their father's ten years' nap in the mysterious vale of silence in the Alleghanies; and to this day other people in other lands listen to the wonderful story of YOUNG RIP VAN WINKLE.

[THE END.]

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